

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 070253

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

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USCINCEUR PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 070253

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SECSTATE, INFO DHAHRAN, JIDDA, LONDON,
NICOSIA, TEL AVIV, TRIPOLI, CAIRO, USUN, APRIL 14, FROM BEIRUT
RPTD TO YOU:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4383

DEPARTMENT PASS CAIRO

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, ENRG, ETRN, LE, US

SUBJECT: EXPLOSIONS DAMAGE TAPLINE TERMINAL STORAGE TANKS

SUMMARY: EXPLOSIONS PRESUMED BUT NOT PROVEN TO BE WORK
OF ARAB GUERRILLAS DESTROYED ONE CRUDE OIL STORAGE TANK,
DAMAGED THREE OTHERS AT TAPLINE TERMINAL NEAR SIDON
EARLY TODAY. NO CASUALTIES. DAMAGE APPEARS TO BE MODERATE
BUT TAPLINE DOES NOT WISH EXTENT PUBLICIZED. EXPORT AND
REFINERY OPERATIONS COULD RESUME SHORTLY. END SUMMARY.

1. TAPLINE SPOKESMAN GAVE EMBASSY THIS ACCOUNT:

A. ABOUT 2 A. M. LOCAL (MIDNIGHT GMT), EXPLOSIONS
FOLLOWED BY LARGE FIRE DESTROYED ONE OF TWO LARGE TRANS
ARABIAN PIPELINE (TAPLINE) CRUDE OIL STORAGE TANKS USED TO
SUPPLY MEDRECO REFINERY AT ZAHRAINI, NEAR SIDON,
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PAGE 02 STATE 070253

SEVERELY DAMAGED OTHER TANK. TAPLINE AND MEDRECO WHOLLY AMERICAN- OWNED. OTHER EXPLOSIONS DAMAGED TWO LARGE CRUDE OIL STORAGE TANKS IN TAPLINE TANK FARM, ABOUT HALF MILE DISTANT, USED FOR TAPLINE CRUDE EXPORTS, AND EXPLOSION SLIGHTLY DAMAGED RADIO CONTROL STATION. SOME EXPLOSIVES APPEARED TO BE TIME CHARGES. A TANKER, ESSO BREMEN, HAD BEEN LOADING BUT LEFT UNDAMAGED.

B. EXPLOSIONS WERE WORK OF " LARGE" RAIDING PARTY WHICH PRESUMED BE ARAB GUERRILLAS ALTHOUGH IDENTITY NOT RPT NOT KNOWN. AS IN PAST SABOTAGE INCIDENTS, TAPLINE PROBABLY WILL LEAVE IDENTIFICATION TO PUBLIC AUTHORITIES. RAIDERS OVER-POWERED AND TIED UP THREE TAPLINE EMPLOYEES AND SOME CUSTOMS MEN, PUT THEM IN PIPELINE'S SHORE CONTROL STATION AND WENT ABOUT BUSINESS. SOME SNIPING REPORTED BUT NO CASUALTIES KNOWN.

C. GUARD FORCE NUMBERED ABOUT 20 BUT INSTALLATIONS' LARGE SIZE MAKES SECURITY DIFFICULT. LEBANESE ARMY AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS FROM SIDON AND BEIRUT RESPONDED QUICKLY, APPARENTLY NO RAIDERS CAPTURED.

D. AT DAWN FULL EXTENT OF DAMAGE NOT KNOWN BUT APPEARED TO BE MODERATE ENOUGH TO PERMIT RESUMPTION OF EXPORT AND REFINERY OPERATIONS SHORTLY.

2. COMMENT:

A. ALTHOUGH IDENTIFICATION OF ATTACKERS NOT YET MADE, WE THINK IT OBVIOUS THAT ATTACK ON MEDRECO IS FEDAYEEN REPLY TO ISRAELI RAID ON BEIRUT AS WELL AS CONTINUATION OF STILL EARLIER DECISION STRIKE AT AMERICAN INTERESTS. THERE WERE PREVIOUS REPORTS IN LATE MARCH OF OPERATION PLANNED AGAINST TAPLINE/ MEDRECO.

B. TAPLINE IS FREQUENT TARGET SABOTAGE, THIS 16 TH TIME IT HIT. ABOUT 95 PERCENT OF PIPELINE'S THROUGHOUT EXPORTED, REMAINDER FEEDS MEDRECO REFINERY WHICH SUPPLIES ABOUT 40 PERCENT LEBANESE DOMESTIC PETROLEUM REQUIREMENTS. TAPLINE DOES NOT WISH EXTENT OF DAMAGE PUBLICIZED, GENERALLY WISHES MAINTAIN LOW PROFILE THESE MATTERS, LEAVE PUBLIC STATEMENTS TO PUBLIC AUTHORITIES. TAPLINE SHOULD NOT CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 STATE 070253

BE PUBLICLY CITED AS SOURCE THIS REPORT. WILL PROVIDE FURTHER

DETAILS WHEN AVAILABLE. BUFFUM UNQUOTE. ROGERS

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*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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